

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Making a difference in the lives of individual Americans.

Although this phrase may define the core mission of many governmental agencies, it is used so often that, at times, the meaning can feel hackneyed and diluted. But in this issue of the *Journal*, you will see real examples of how NIJ's work makes a difference in the lives of real people—people like Melody Reilly, who recently sat in a Texas courtroom to watch the sentencing of the men who murdered her brother and dumped his body in a field. The Center for Human Identification, an NIJ-supported forensic laboratory that uses the most advanced DNA technologies to solve missing persons and unidentified human remains cases, was able to identify Shawn Reilly's bones ... and help bring his killers to justice. Learn more about the Center for Human Identification in our lead article, "Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains: The Nation's Silent Mass Disaster," and how the services of this unique DNA laboratory are available to every law enforcement officer, medical examiner, and coroner in the country.

Another example of DNA technology making a difference in individual lives occurred on a tragically grand scale on September 11, 2001. On the 5th anniversary of the terrorist attacks, NIJ published a major report on how DNA was used to identify the victims. But this report is much more than a historical document. It also looks to the future, offering guidance from an NIJ-supported panel of forensic experts on how to prepare for another large-scale DNA identification effort, whether from a terrorist attack, a mass transportation accident, or a natural disaster. Our story "Identifying Remains: Lessons Learned From 9/11" highlights the full report.

Our third DNA-related story is another example of how NIJ makes a difference. "Online DNA Training Targets Lawyers, Judges" showcases one of our most recent (and exciting) tools: online training to help criminal justice practitioners—judges, prosecutors, and criminal defense attorneys—use DNA evidence in the pursuit of truth in the courtroom.

All three of these examples are made possible by funding under the President's DNA Initiative, a 5-year effort to enhance the use of this important tool to solve crimes and protect the innocent. NIJ is privileged to administer the Initiative, *Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology*, on behalf of the Administration and the U.S. Department of Justice.

But this issue of the *Journal* is not just about DNA. In it, you will also find articles about the public's perception of police officers and the correlation between sexual and physical assaults on women in relationships. Both provide important information that practitioners and policymakers should know.

Whether forensics, policing, or violence against women, these—and many other key criminal justice areas—are supported by NIJ's research, development, and evaluation. I hope that the results of our work, highlighted in this and other issues of the *Journal*, will help you in your work to further the cause of justice in America.



Glenn R. Schmitt
Acting Director, National Institute of Justice